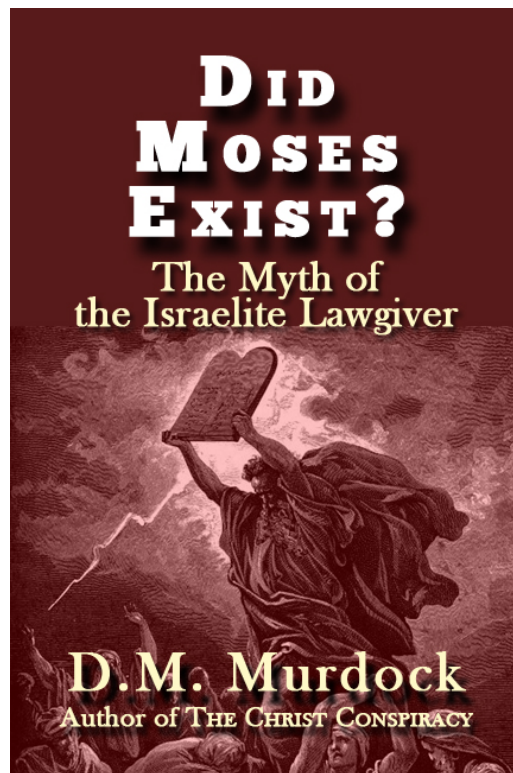


# The Moses-Dionysus Connection

Adapted from

*Did Moses Exist?*

By D.M. Murdock/Acharya S



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THE MOSES-DIONYSUS CONNECTION

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# The Moses-Dionysus Connection

“I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old...”

Psalm 78:2

“The Bible is like water, the Mishna like wine: he that has learned the scripture, and not the Mishna, is a blockhead.”<sup>1</sup>

Rabbinical saying from the Gemara<sup>2</sup>

“The existence of Moses as well as the veracity of the Exodus story is disputed amongst archaeologists and Egyptologists, with experts in the field of biblical criticism citing logical inconsistencies, new archaeological evidence, historical evidence, and related origin myths in Canaanite culture.”

“Moses,” Wikipedia.org

“We cannot be sure that Moses ever lived because there are no traces of his earthly existence outside of tradition.”

Dr. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian* (2)

“On Moses as the putative ‘founder of the Israelite religion,’ ...Susan Niditch, [in] *Ancient Israelite Religion*..., barely mentions the possibility of a historical Moses...”

Dr. William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?* (99)

Beginning in at least the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in Western scholarship, European theologians and others began noticing parallels between the stories of the biblical patriarch Moses and the Greek god Dionysus/Dionysos or “Bacchus,” as he was also popularly styled. One of these churchmen was English scholar Hugh Sanford, whose Latin opus *De Descensu Domini Nostri Iesu Christi ad Inferos* was published in 1611. Concerning Sanford, Dr. Don Cameron Allen, a Johns Hopkins professor, remarks:

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the Talmud called the “Oral Torah,” the “learning” and the “second law,” the Mishna or Mishnah (משנה) constitutes a written composition based on oral debates between Jewish sages/rabbis from the first century BCE to the second AD/CE, redacted around 200 or 220 by Rabbi Yehudah haNasi, although Jewish tradition claims that it, like the biblical Torah, was “delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai.” (Barclay, 1) The 63 tractates of the Mishnah represent explications of biblical laws, rituals and traditions, such as concerns religious festivals and the status of women. The Mishnah frequently treats scripture as allegorical, not literal or historical. Hence, those who do not know the allegorical meanings in the Bible are “blockheads.” Biblical allegorization can be found described in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* under “Allegorical Interpretation.” In the quote here, Lightfoot (1.1) combines two different sayings: The first part can be found in Stehelin, 1.39. The latter part of this quote is from Wagenseil, 516: *Alii dicunt, utut quis maxime Scripturam & Mischnam ad didicerit, si tamen Sapientibus non ministraverit, nihilo minus pro plebejo habendus. Caeterum qui solam Scripturam sine Mischnam didicit, bardus est...*

<sup>2</sup> Also in the Talmud, the Gemara (גמרא) represents commentary and analysis of the Mishnah, existing in two versions, one published in 350-400 and another in 500 AD/CE.

Following the evidence of ancient history and his three linguistic laws, Sanford discovers that Isis is the mother of Moses and that Moses was also known as Misen, Mises and Moso. Sanford finds it more reasonable to identify Moses with Bacchus of Nysa, a place-name which is an anagram of “Syna” or Sinai. Reading Nonnos’ epic about Bacchus, Sanford noticed the name Maira, the dog-star, a distorted form of the name of Moses’ sister Miriam. Orus [Horus] is Aaron; and Caleb, which means “dog” in Hebrew, is Bacchus’ companionable pet...<sup>3</sup>

As we can see here, there are a number of interesting parallels between Moses and Dionysus, brought forth in a Latin work, one of a number of such opuses, eventually yielding to a significant amount of English texts highlighting the same comparisons and many more, in detail.

## Vossius

Another scholar of this era who made the Moses-Dionysus connection was famed Dutch theologian and humanist professor Dr. Gerhard Johannes Vossius (1577-1649), also known as Gerhard Johan Voss, whose real name was Gerrit Janszoon Vos. In his massive work *De theologia gentili et physiologia Christiana*, initially published around 1641 and never translated into English, the devout Christian Vossius contended that humanity had made the “mistake of looking to Nature rather than to the God of Nature,” which led to the proliferation of nature gods and goddesses such as “Joves and Junos, found in every sacred acre of the world.”<sup>4</sup> These pagan deities, Vossius averred, were biblical figures erroneously perceived: “Great patches of Vos’s book are devoted to the borrowed Hebrew theologies and sacred histories of the ethnics.”<sup>5</sup> Vossius makes many equations between these various Jewish and Gentile characters, including that “Moses is Liber, Osiris, Monius, Mises, Moso and Milichus.”<sup>6</sup> As Allen remarks:

Picking up Sanford’s Nysa-Sinai intimation, Vos develops the Moses-Bacchus relationship still further. Both heroes spent a good deal of time in the Arabian desert, and the Dionysian laureate Nonnos probably had the crossing of the Red Sea in mind when he wrote of his hero that “he took to his heels and ran in fear too fast to be pursued/until he leaped into the gray waters of the Erythraian Sea.”<sup>7</sup>

Allen next comments:

There is little doubt that Vos knew more about world religion than almost anyone else in his generation...<sup>8</sup>

As it turns out, where there is smoke, there is fire, and these learned individuals were not mistaken in noticing and explicating this comparative-religion theme of Moses and Dionysus. Of course, since they were largely clergy with a vested interest and, probably, sincere beliefs, they could not or would not admit that the Jewish supernatural stories were unoriginal and had “borrowed” from the Pagan myths, rather than the other way around. Nor could they afford to look closely at the guarded meanings or “mysteries” behind these myths so commonly held.

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<sup>3</sup> Allen, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, 68.

<sup>5</sup> Allen, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Allen, 68.

<sup>7</sup> Allen, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Allen, 69.

## Bochart

This Moses-Bacchus correlation appeared so obvious (and fascinating) to the European educated elite, the majority of whom were Christian authorities, that they spent centuries engaged in its analysis. One conclusion as to how this strange development had occurred was proffered by the influential French biblical scholar Rev. Samuel Bochart (1599-1667). Bochart surmised that, after Moses's story became known throughout the Levant, agile Phoenician sailors led by the prince Cadmus, a supposed contemporary of the biblical patriarch Joshua, adopted the tale and spread it wherever they went.<sup>9</sup> This conclusion of Phoenicians spreading religion via their many sea voyages is not without merit, but the facts indicate the opposite transmission, as the Bible writers composed myths largely revolving around the deities of the Phoenicians, Canaanites and Ugarits, as well as the (Sumero) Babylonians and Egyptians, et al.

## Patrick

Decades after Bochart, English bishop and theologian Dr. Simon/Symon Patrick (1626-1707) continued the analysis:

...in Orpheus's hymns, Bacchus is called Mises, which seems to be the same with Moses; out of whose story all that the Greeks and others say of Bacchus seems to have been framed.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, yet another Christian authority of a past era was aware of the parallels between Moses and Dionysus, but, as also a believer in the Bible, he too attempted to trace the Dionysian myth to the Hebrew lawgiver. However, it is apparent that these stories are mythical, and the evidence indicates the myth first existed in other cultures, including the Egyptian, Greek and Asian Minor.

In Patrick's comment, we see one of many references to the epithet "Mises" or Μίσης, a Bacchic title found in *Orphic Hymn 42* and very similar to the Greek Μωυσῆς or "Moyses" of the Greek Old Testament or Septuagint (e.g., Exod 2:11). For more information on this Dionysian epithet, see my book *Did Moses Exist?*

Patrick also believed early Church father Justin Martyr had demonstrated that the major Bacchic proselytizer, Orpheus, learned a number of his doctrines from Moses's books.<sup>11</sup> However, there is little evidence of detailed knowledge by Gentiles of the Jewish texts before these latter were translated into Greek during the third or second centuries BCE or even for a couple of centuries after that time. Moreover, Orpheus is not a single "historical" individual but a combination of characters, some real and some mythical. This fictional composite is depicted in antiquity as the "St. Paul" of his purported time, travelling in nearly the same areas as the latter Christian figure, while preaching the god known as Soter or "Savior" (Bacchus), centuries before Jesus Christ supposedly lived.

## Huet

Following Bochart was his pupil Bishop of Avranches Dr. Pierre Daniel Huet (1630-1721), an esteemed scholar in his own right who continued the Moses-Dionysus discussion, suggesting, as a related aside, that the famed Greek poet Homer "may have been an Egyptian and not a Greek;

<sup>9</sup> Allen, 70.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick (1738), 255.

<sup>11</sup> Patrick (1695), 8.

further [Homer] read all of Moses' writings and took over his sacred history and his theology."<sup>12</sup> Huet averred that "Moses was converted by the Phoenicians into the gods Taautus and Adonis."<sup>13</sup> Concerning this contention, Allen remarks:

The second metamorphosis fits very snugly, because Adonis was born in Arabia where Moses dwelt, and was, in his myth, hidden in an ark entrusted to Proserpine [Persephone/Kore].... [According to Huet,] Adonis is, of course, the same as Bacchus, Mercury, Osiris, Apollo and Helios; hence, since Moses is Adonis, he is also these other gods. ...by looking about, Huet discovers Moses in the pantheons of Persia, China, Japan, Mexico and the primitive religions of the Germans, French and English. He is, of course, best found in Greece and Rome, and in the latter country he was worshiped as Romulus.<sup>14</sup>

As writers in antiquity had discussed a number of Dionysuses,<sup>15</sup> so too does Huet bring up various "Bacchi" as originating with the pre-Greek or proto-Greek inhabitants of Greece, the Pelasgians, referring to one such Dionysus as Moses.<sup>16</sup>

The one conclusion we can surely make about this centuries-long continuity of scholarship is that the parallels between Dionysus and Moses are real and highly striking. Furthermore, what Huet's "monomania" actually reflects are stories of lawgivers and founders of nations similar in many aspects to Moses. Hence, this learned Christian authority is perceiving a genuine phenomenon, but there is a more universal reason behind this coincidence, as it has to do with the sun, the object of worship for many thousands of years that ancient writers such as Macrobius (4<sup>th</sup> cent. AD/CE) found as the basis of many deities, including the bulk of those discussed by Huet. Hence, these gods' equation is also sensible, although none of their myths is exactly the same, obviously. In reality, universal myths are changed according to the era and location of a particular culture, its emphases and mores, traditions and rituals.

## **Voltaire**

So striking and well known were these correspondences that famed French scholar Voltaire (1694-1778) expounded further upon them:

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<sup>12</sup> Allen, 80.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, 80.

<sup>14</sup> Allen, 80-81.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding Dionysus, in *Of the Nature of the Gods* (3.58), Roman statesman Marcus Tullius ("Tully") Cicero (106-43 BCE) commented: "There are many also of the Dionysi. The first was the son of Jupiter and Proserpine. The second, who is said to have killed Nysa, was the son of Nilus. The third, who reigned in Asia, and for whom the Sabazia were instituted, was the son of Caprius. The fourth, for whom they celebrate the Orphic festivals, sprung from Jupiter and Luna, the first, who is supposed to have instituted the Trieterides, was the son of Nysus and Thyone." (Cicero/Francklin, 189) The original Latin: *Dionysos multos habemus, primum Iove et Proserpina natum, secundum Nilo, qui Nysam dicitur interemisse, tertium Cabiropatre, eumque regem Asiae praefuisse dicunt, cui Sabazia sunt instituta, quartum Iove et Luna, cui sacra Orphica putantur confici, quintum Nyso natum et Thyone, a quo trieterides constitutae putantur*. While some attributes from "real people" may have been attached to the Dionysus myth, what we are seeing is the typical syncretism as a god and his cult—this one, the enormously popular grapevine-and-wine cult/god—moves around the world.

<sup>16</sup> Huet, 221: *Atqui Dionysus ille fuit Moses*.

The ancient poets have placed the birth of Bacchus in Egypt; he is exposed on the Nile and it is from that event that he is named Mises by the first Orpheus, which, in Egyptian, signifies “saved from the waters”... He is brought up near a mountain of Arabia called Nisa [Nysa], which is believed to be Mount Sinai. It is pretended that a goddess ordered him to go and destroy a barbarous nation and that he passed through the Red Sea on foot, with a multitude of men, women, and children. Another time the river Orontes suspended its waters right and left to let him pass, and the Hydaspes did the same. He commanded the sun to stand still; two luminous rays proceeded from his head. He made a fountain of wine spout up by striking the ground with his thyrsus, and engraved his laws on two tables of marble. He wanted only to have afflicted Egypt with ten plagues, to be the perfect copy of Moses.<sup>17</sup>

Here we see correlations between not only Dionysus and Moses but also Bacchus and Joshua, such as the sun standing still. (Jos 10:12-13) Rather than serving as an impossible “historical fact,” the tale of the sun standing still reflects the solstice, a Latin word meaning “sun stands still.” This motif is clearly part of *myth*, not history, unless we are to allow that Dionysus’s story too is “real.”

Alas, even the great Voltaire writes here as if he believed the Dionysian myth was a copy of an historical Israelite lawgiver, rather than both representing a mythical “founder” archetype, the Moses myth the later of the two and significantly based on Dionysus.

## Edwards

The Moses-Bacchus connection became so well known by the time of American theologian Rev. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) that he composed notes about it in his famous *Blank Bible*, explaining that the “blind heathen” had heard of Moses’s biblical adventures and had imitated them in “whom they called Bacchus.”<sup>18</sup>

In this regard, American religion professor Dr. Gerald R. McDermott states:

Edwards noted in his *Blank Bible* that heathen stories about gods and goddesses were actually distortions of Hebrew counterparts. Saturn, for example, is a transmutation of Adam, Noah and Abraham; Hercules is a Greek rendition of Joshua, Bacchus of Nimrod, Moses and the Hebrew deity; Apis and Serapis are Egyptian retellings of the story of Joseph.<sup>19</sup>

As we can see, while the churchman Edwards objected to the “blind heathen” supposing that the ancient gods were the same as biblical figures, he himself was compelled to admit the similarities and derive one from the other, the Bible taking precedent, of course, based on his conditioning and vocation.

## Dupuis

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, in his opus *Origine de tous les Cultes, ou la Religion Universelle*, French professor Charles Dupuis (1742-1809) built upon this scholarship and laid out the universal syncretism in all its glory. Dupuis’s multivolume opus influenced many people during his time

<sup>17</sup> Voltaire, 1.374-375.

<sup>18</sup> McDermott, 127-128, etc.

<sup>19</sup> McDermott, 94.



and for decades after, possibly including various American Founding Fathers,<sup>20</sup> a work that remains relevant to this day.

As part of his comparative-religion treatise, Dupuis remarks:

Amongst the different miracles of Bacchus and of his Bacchantes, there are prodigies very similar to those, which are attributed to Moses and to Christ; for instances such as the sources of water, which the former cause to spout from the innermost of the rocks, and the fiery tongues, which as it is said, filled the apartments, where the disciples of Christ used to meet.<sup>21</sup>

Dupuis did not merely relate the correspondences but also exposed hidden meanings often rooted in nature worship and astral religion or astrotheology, the reverence of the sun, moon, planets, stars and constellations. In this regard, he further states:

The fable of Jason, the conqueror of the Ram of the golden fleece, or of the celestial sign, which, by its disengagement from the solar rays in the morning, announces the arrival of the Star of Day at the equinoctial Bull of spring, is alike famous in mythology, as the fiction of the twelve labors of the Sun under the name of Hercules, and that of its travels under that of Bacchus. This is again an allegorical poem, which belongs to another people, and which has been composed by other priests, whose great Divinity was the Sun. It would seem to be the work of the Pelasgi of Thessaly, as the poem on Bacchus was that of, or had its origin with, the people of Boetia. Each nation, while worshipping the same God Sun under different names, had its priests and poets, who did not want to copy each other in their sacred cantos. The Jews celebrated this same equinoctial epoch, under the name of feast of the Lamb and of the triumph of the cherished people of God over the hostile people. It was also at that epoch that the Hebrews, when delivered from oppression, passed into the promised land, into the abode of delight, the gate of which was opened to them by the sacrifice of the Lamb. The worshippers of Bacchus said of this Ram, or of this equinoctial Lamb, that it was the same, which in the desert in the midst of the Sands, caused the discovery of spring water, in order to refresh the army of Bacchus, as also Moses with a stroke of his wand, made to spout out in the desert, in order to quench the thirst of his army. All these astronomical fables have a point of contact in the celestial sphere, and the horns of Moses resemble very much those of Ammon and of Bacchus.<sup>22</sup>

Again we see important parallels between Bacchus and Moses. Concerning the conception of Dionysus, Dupuis remarks:

In certain legends they gave him Ceres, or the celestial Virgin [Aphrodite/Venus], as his mother. In more ancient legends, it was the daughter of Ceres [Demeter], or Proserpine [Persephone/Kore], who had conceived him in her amours with the supreme God, metamorphosed into a Serpent. This Serpent is the famous Serpent of Aesculapius, which healed in all kind of sickness, like that, which Moses brought up in the desert, and to which Christ compares himself. A Bacchus, with bull's horns born thereof, because in reality, each time when the Sun made its conjunction with this Serpent of autumn, the

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<sup>20</sup> See my article "Did George Washington and Thomas Jefferson Believe Jesus was a Myth?"

<sup>21</sup> Dupuis, 164-165.

<sup>22</sup> Dupuis, 174.

Bull of Spring was then in the ascendant, giving thus its forms to Bacchus, and carrying his nurses the Hyades.<sup>23</sup>

Dupuis is one of the first voices raised in this debate who did not automatically default to biblical priority and who suggested that biblical figures are copies of ancient myths, not the other way around. In this view, these figures are as mythical as their archetypal predecessors, who possess astrotheological significance.

## Hort

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the devout continued to highlight the numerous striking parallels between Moses and Dionysus, including English scholar Rev. William Jillard Hort, in his book *The New Pantheon* (1808):

The best historians, Herodotus, Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus, assert that [Dionysus] was born in Egypt, and educated at Nysa, a city in Arabia Felix, whither he had been sent by his father Jupiter Ammon. From them it appears that the Bacchus of the Greeks was no other than the famous Osiris, conqueror of India. This Bacchus is supposed, by many learned men, to be Moses. Both are represented as born in Egypt, and exposed in their infancy upon the Nile. Bacchus was educated at Nissa or Nysa, in Arabia, and in the same country passed forty years. Bacchus, when persecuted, retired to the borders of the Red Sea; and Moses fled with the Israelites, from the Egyptian bondage, beyond the same sea. The numerous army of Bacchus, composed of men and women, passed through Arabia in their journey to India. The army of the Jewish legislator, composed of men, women and children, was obliged to wander in the desert, long before they arrived in Palestine, which, as well as India, is part of the continent of Asia. The fable represents Bacchus with horns, which may be supposed to allude to the light that is said to have shone around the countenance of Moses, who in old engravings is frequently represented with horns. Moses received the Jewish law on Mount Sinai. Bacchus was brought up on Mount Nysa. Bacchus, armed with his thyrsus, defeated the giants. The miraculous rod of Moses was the means of destroying the descendants of the giants. Jupiter was said to have sent Bacchus into India to exterminate a sinful nation; and it is recorded that Moses was commanded, by the true God, to do the same in Palestine. The god Pan gave Bacchus a dog to accompany him in his travels; Caleb, which in Hebrew signifies a dog, was the name of the faithful companion of Moses. Bacchus, by striking the earth with his thyrsus, produced rivers of wine. Moses, by striking the rock with his miraculous rod, caused water to gush out to satisfy the raging thirst of the Israelites. Others have regarded Bacchus as being the same with Nimrod, the first ambitious conqueror, and enslaver of men; that mighty hunter before the Lord.<sup>24</sup>

Even though, as we can see abundantly, the Moses-Dionysus connection had been made for centuries by some of Europe's best scholars, the bulk of whom were erudite clergy, Hort's treatise was subjected to ridicule by those who, thinking in terms of Moses as a historical figure, could not fathom how the two characters could be comparable.

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<sup>23</sup> Dupuis, 259-260.

<sup>24</sup> Hort, 50-51.

For example, nearly 60 years later, an editor for *The Saturday Review* (1867) negatively reviewed Hort's book, which was evidently still influential at that time:

Moses has had to suffer many things of late at the hands of his various critics. He has been accused of many mistakes and inaccuracies, and he has been supposed to represent different authors—Jehovists, Elohist, Samuel and all the rest. But it did not strike us before that, in thus being cut up into small slices, Moses was only sharing the fate of Osiris; nor need we be shocked any longer by the blunders in dates and figures in the works of one who was really Bacchus, the god of wine.<sup>25</sup>

This critic titles his essay “A Manual of Mythology,” but, oddly, he seems unable to comprehend that the Moses tale is indeed *mythology*, which explains why it can be found in numerous places, as an *archetype*. In this scenario, no “real people” whose “true biographies” need to be protected are necessary.

The *Saturday Review* writer next proceeds to critique Hort's Moses-Bacchus passage, providing some of the quote above, along with criticisms (in brackets):

We must quote some more in order to give an idea of the stuff on which the minds of thousands of young persons have been fed, and are still fed, even at some of our better schools:

Both Bacchus and Moses are represented as born in Egypt and exposed in their infancy in the Nile. [Bacchus is not.] Bacchus was educated at Nissa or Nysa, in Arabia, and in the same country Moses passed forty years. [Moses was not educated there.] Bacchus when persecuted, retired to the borders of the Red Sea [who says so?]; and Moses fled with the Israelites, from the Egyptian bondage, beyond the same sea. The numerous army of Bacchus, composed of man and women, passed through Arabia in their journey to India. The army of the Jewish legislator, composed of men, women and children, was obliged to wander in the desert, long before they arrived at Palestine, which, as well as India, is part of the continent of Asia [so is China]. The fable represents Bacchus with horns, which may be supposed to allude to the light that is said to have shone around the countenance of Moses, who in old engravings [of the time of Bacchus, we suppose] is frequently represented with horns. Moses received the Jewish law on Mount Sinai..<sup>26</sup>

The reviewer next repeats the rest of Hort's remarks above, without comment. After omitting Hort's first sentence pointing to the sources of his claims, i.e., the historians Herodotus, Plutarch and Diodorus, the critic further ignores Hort's comment that “Bacchus is supposed by many learned men to be Moses.” Instead, he provides a few erroneous remarks, such as, it would appear from his ambiguous comment, that Bacchus is not represented as “born” in Egypt, a mythical “fact” found in the writings of Herodotus and others who claimed an Egyptian origin for the god.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Saturday Review*, 23.209.

<sup>26</sup> *Saturday Review*, 23.209.

<sup>27</sup> At 2.42, Herodotus relates that Dionysus is equated with Osiris, while *Homeric Hymn 1 to Dionysus* discusses various origins of Dionysus, implying that he was born on or near “a certain Nysa, a mountain most high and richly grown with woods, far off in Phoenice, near the streams of Aegyptus.” (...ἔστι δὲ τις Νύση, ὑπατον ὄρος, ἀνθέων ὕλη, τηλοῦ Φοινίκης, σχεδὸν Αἰγύπτου ῥοάων...)

### Drawn from the Nile and Educated in Arabia

Contrary to the critic's vague comment "Bacchus is not," Dionysus *is* represented as "exposed on the Nile," based on his epithet "Nilo" in Cicero,<sup>28</sup> while his epithet "Mises" has been said to be the same as Moses, meaning "drawn from the water." Dionysus's Egyptian counterpart, Osiris, serving as the Nile itself, was viewed as "drawn from the waters" in the daily Egyptian behavior (Diodorus 1.97.2).<sup>29</sup> As related by early Church father Epiphanius (*Pan.* 29.7-30.3), the Egyptians also celebrated an annual festival of drawing out Nile water, on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Tybi (January 5/6<sup>th</sup>), believing that "the water was magically transformed into wine or that special healing power, magical virtue, was to be attributed to it."<sup>30</sup> Hence, Osiris is "drawn from the Nile," and Dionysus being equated with Osiris, the ancient writers also told the same tale of Bacchus.

Here we also see an important source of the water-to-wine miracle associated with not only Osiris but also his Greek counterpart Dionysus, who is depicted as producing wine from water, a fitting attribute for a sun and vine god. In the Bible (Jn 2:1-11), the later Jewish version, Jesus, was said to do this same miracle, at the wedding feast of Cana, an absurd tale if taken literally, depicting Christ's miraculous production of 150 *gallons* or more of wine for an already besotted gathering.<sup>31</sup>

Like the Egyptian and Greek gods, Christ was also said to have been born on January 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup>, a celebration still marked in the Armenian Orthodox and Coptic Churches to this day.<sup>32</sup> All three of these gods' births have also been placed at the winter solstice, appropriate for sun gods. Osiris's birth has been celebrated traditionally at the summer solstice as well.<sup>33</sup>

It is further inaccurate to contend that Moses was not educated in the desert, as according to the biblical tale, he most assuredly was, in minute detail, by the biblical god Yahweh. However, that claim is not what Hort wrote in any event, so the *SR* writer's remark represents a straw man.

<sup>28</sup> In *Of the Nature of the Gods* (3.58), Cicero speaks of a Dionysus as "Nilo," in the ablative designating origin; hence, he is "of the Nile." The epithet "Nilus" was also used to describe Osiris, as by Plutarch (*De Iside* 363d: οὕτω παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις Νεῖλον εἶναι τὸν Ὅσιριν; 364a: οἱ δὲ σοφώτεροι τῶν ἱερέων οὐ μόνον τὸν Νεῖλον Ὅσιριν καλοῦσιν). Hence, it would also be applicable to his Greek counterpart, Bacchus.

<sup>29</sup> ἐν μὲν γὰρ Ἀκανθῶν πόλει, πέραν τοῦ Νεῖλου κατὰ τὴν Λιβύην ἀπὸ σταδίων ἑκατὸν καὶ εἴκοσι τῆς Μέμφεως, πίθον εἶναι τετρημένον, εἰς ὃν τῶν ἱερέων ἐξήκοντα καὶ τριακοσίους καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν ὕδωρ φέρειν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ Νεῖλου.

<sup>30</sup> Roheim, 360; Epiphanius/Williams, 2.61.

<sup>31</sup> At John 2:6, we read that Christ had changed the contents of "six waterpots of stone" that held "two or three firkins apiece." The Greek word for "firkins" is μετρητής or *metrētēs* (G3355), defined as "a measurer, the name of a utensil known as a amphora, which is a species of measure used for liquids and containing somewhat less the nine English gallons or about (40 l)." The lowest figure, if we use the amount of 40 liters multiplied by 12, is around 127 gallons of wine; multiplied by 18, the number climbs to 190 gallons.

<sup>32</sup> See my *2010 Astrotheology Calendar*, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Roheim (360): "It is the birth of Osiris, who like Moses (The Child) comes from the water. The Greek equivalent of Osiris is Dionysus. The water-miracle is equally performed by Dionysus, and what is more, exactly at the same date (5/6<sup>th</sup> of January = 11<sup>th</sup> Tybi) as in Egypt."

The critic continues:

Our constant puzzle in perusing Mr. Hort's questions and answers has been, Whence did he get such things?<sup>34</sup>

In reality, it is not difficult to discover whence Hort got "such things," a fact comprehensible from the numerous detailed discussions for centuries preceding him, scholarship of which the critic is apparently unaware. We have already seen some examples of where this information comes from: Ancient historians and mythographers. The earlier scholars such as Hort were polymaths and linguists who read the classical texts in their original Greek and Latin languages, so they knew perfectly well whence these motifs came.

In this same regard, Hort comments that "Bacchus when persecuted, retired to the borders of the Red Sea," and the *SR* writers asks, "who says so?" If this critic had consulted the primary sources presented by Hort or followed up otherwise on the remark about the learned men making these comparisons, he would have known where these motifs came from.

### **The Ruddy Sea**

In his *Hercules Furens* (899-900), renowned Roman dignitary Seneca (4 BCE-65 AD/CE) characterized Bacchus thus:

...the tamer of Lycurgus and the ruddy sea, who bears a spear-point hidden beneath his vine-wreathed staff.<sup>35</sup>

The Seneca translator here, Dr. Frank Justus Miller, notes that the "ruddy sea" refers to the body of water that Dionysus "crossed when he conquered India."<sup>36</sup> Seneca's original Latin for "ruddy sea" is *rubri maris*,<sup>37</sup> the word *rubri* or "ruddy" connoting redness, as in the *Red* Sea. If Dionysus was "born" in Egypt, then he could be said to cross the Red Sea when his vine-and-wine cult found its way to "India," the Indian "conquest" a motif known for at least three centuries before the common era.<sup>38</sup> This tale certainly did not originate with Seneca, as the Lycurgus story can be found in Homer's *Iliad* (6.130-141), dating to around 900 BCE but often representing accurately the Late Bronze Age (1550-1050),<sup>39</sup> indicating parts of the text had been passed along for centuries. Most of the rest of Hort's contentions can be demonstrated in the

<sup>34</sup> *Saturday Review*, 23.209.

<sup>35</sup> Seneca/Miller, 1.79.

<sup>36</sup> Seneca/Miller, 1.79.

<sup>37</sup> Seneca/Miller, 1.78: *...adsit Lycurgi domitor et rubri maris, tectam virente cuspidem thyrsos gerens...*

<sup>38</sup> Building on the work of the historian Megasthenes, Alexander the Great's successors promoted the idea of an Indian counterpart of Dionysus, god of Alexander's mother, Olympias, a native of Thrace, where some of the earliest Bacchic worship could be found.

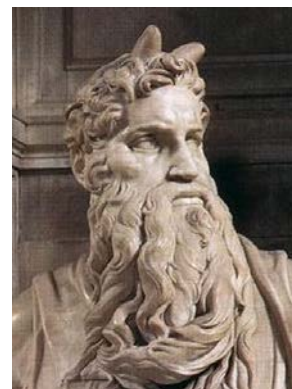
<sup>39</sup> Homer/Murray (1965: 271): "...for even the son of Dryas, mighty Lycurgus, lived not long, seeing that he strove with heavenly gods—he that on a time drove down over the sacred mount of Nysa the nursing mothers of mad Dionysus; and they all let fall to the ground their wands, smitten with an ox-goad by man-slaying Lycurgus. But Dionysus fled, and plunged beneath the wave of the sea, and Thetis received him in her bosom, filled with dread, for mighty terror gat hold of him at the man's threatenings. Then against Lycurgus did the gods that live at ease wax wroth, and the son of Cronos made him blind; and he lived not for long, seeing that he was hated of all the immortal gods. So would not I be minded to fight against the blessed gods."



same manner using primary sources, some of which, such as Homer, thus date to nearly a thousand years or more before the common era.<sup>40</sup>

### **Bull Horns**

The feature of Moses with horns was well known in Christian tradition, as famously depicted by Michelangelo in his marble statue of the lawgiver. The reviewer's comment about the "time of Bacchus" in the horns discussion above, apparently to indicate a supposed anachronism, ranks as irrelevant, as the Bible itself depicts Moses with "horns," a fact this critic apparently did not know.<sup>41</sup> Concerning Dionysus's horns, the ancient Greek playwright Euripides (*Bacchae* 918-922) depicts the character Pentheus as remarking to the god:



Oh look! I think I see two suns, and twin Thebes, the seven-gated city.  
And you seem to lead me, being like a bull and horns seem to grow on  
your head. But were you ever before a beast? For you have certainly  
now become a bull.<sup>42</sup>

As we can see, the motif of the lawgiver with the horns is common to both myths, found in the Bacchus tale by at least the fifth century BCE, when Euripides (480-406 BCE) wrote.

### **China and India**

Furthermore, the Hort reviewer's remark about China represents heckling, proving nothing about the parallels. Since India, not China, was the next obvious destination after Arabia for many travelers in antiquity, in the same direction taken by Moses, the comment by Hort rates as appropriate. This assertion is especially relevant when one considers that the term "India" was employed confusedly by ancient writers, including Greek geographer Strabo (64/63 BCE–c. 24 AD/CE), to designate Arabia as well, a fact undoubtedly known by the learned Hort:

...the name India was used so vaguely by the ancients, even by Strabo occasionally, that it is not improbable he meant by it, merely the coast of Arabia, beyond the straits [of Hormuz].<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Dionysus is first found in the extant literary record on a stele from Pylos dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In addition to Homer and Herodotus, Hesiod (fl. c. 750 or 650 BCE) and Aristophanes (448-380 BCE), among many others, also write about the god.

<sup>41</sup> Exodus 34:29 describes Moses coming down the mountain after speaking with God, not knowing that the "skin of his face shone." In this passage, the Hebrew word rendered "shone" is קָרַן *qaran* (H7160), which means "to shine," "to send out rays," "to display or grow horns, be horned." *Gesenius's Lexicon* defines *qaran* also as "to radiate, to emit beams," the source of Moses being depicted with horns, as it is in the case of other solar heroes or sun gods. In his Latin translation of the Bible called the Vulgate, St. Jerome rendered *qaran* in the Exodus verse as *cornuta* or "horned," which could also be translated as "radiant." Either way, we can see the clear association here of Moses with horns, as well as with the sun.

<sup>42</sup> Euripides/Buckley. The original Greek: καὶ μὴν ὄραν μοι δύο μὲν ἡλίους δοκῶ, δισσὰς δὲ Θήβας καὶ πόλιν ἐπτάστομον· καὶ ταῦρος ἡμῖν πρόσθεν ἡγεῖσθαι δοκεῖς καὶ σῶ κέρατα κρατὶ προσπεφυκέναι. ἀλλ' ἢ ποτ' ἦσθα θήρ; τεταύρωσαι γὰρ οὖν.

<sup>43</sup> Kerr, 18.109. This confusion continued into the Byzantine Period (3<sup>rd</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> cents. AD/CE), as described in the writings of Greco-Syrian chronicler John Malalas (491-578). As Canadian Classics professor Dr. Reinhard Pummer (265) comments: "According to Malalas, the commander of the Arabs was given

Rather than ridiculing the earlier scholars, modern professor McDermott confirms the Bacchus-Moses scholarship:

The Bacchus story also contained remarkable similarities to Mosaic attributes and legends. For, as Bochart pointed out, both Bacchus and Moses were born in Egypt, shut up in an “ark,” and put on the waters. Both fled from Egypt toward the Red Sea and had serpents (in Moses’ case, a bronze serpent). For both, water flowed from a rock and milk and honey were provided. Both were called legislators, turned sticks into snakes, saw light in the darkness, and had unknown tombs...<sup>44</sup>

The fact will remain that when we look clearly without the biased glasses of bibliolatry, we see mythical figures sharing a common archetype, which is represented accurately by Hort. Like so many other texts even to this day, Hort’s work suffers from an attempt to make many of these mythical characters into real people, derived from “historical” biblical figures, which means that he does not always comprehend the syncretism of ancient mythology.<sup>45</sup>

## **Le Brun**

Nevertheless, the perspective of this juxtaposition continued to shift, and the less devout and non-bibliolatrous evinced that Moses was based on Dionysus. One such commentator was French novelist Charles-Antoine-Guillaume Pigault-Lebrun or “Le Brun” (1753-1835), who in his *Doubts of Infidels* remarked:

The history of Moses is copied from the history of Bacchus, who was called Mises by the Egyptians, instead of Moses. Bacchus was born in Egypt; so was Moses... Bacchus passed through the Red Sea on dry ground; so did Moses. Bacchus was a lawgiver; so was Moses. Bacchus was picked up in a box that floated on the water; so was Moses.... Bacchus by striking a rock made wine gush forth... Bacchus was worshipped...in Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, Arabia, Asia and Greece, before Abraham’s day.<sup>46</sup>

Here we see the logical conclusion made in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that Moses’s account is mythical, copied from Paganism to Judaism, rather than the other way around, as centuries of clergy had averred, thereby continually acknowledging the parallels. Abraham’s day is estimated to be sometime between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, depending on the source. However, skeptical scholarship contends that the Abraham stories were created much later and that Abraham too is not a historical figure.<sup>47</sup>

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20,000 boys and girls that he sold into slavery in Persia and India. It is not likely that the latter term refers to India in Asia. Although some Byzantine authors know of India in southern Asia, they usually mean by India the Red Sea area of either Ethiopia or southern Arabia.”

<sup>44</sup> McDermott, 191.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Hort’s treatment of Apollo and the sun as two separate entities.

<sup>46</sup> Draper, 514; Pigault-Lebrun, 19-20. The original of this work was in French and was called *Le Citateur*. An English translation was included in a volume with a peculiar title: *An Eye-Opener, “Citateur, par Pigault.” Le Brun, Doubts of Infidels*, by someone named “Zepa.”

<sup>47</sup> It has been evinced that Abraham is Brahma, the Indian god demoted to the tribal deity of the ancestral philosophers who came from India to become Jews, as ancient chroniclers Megasthenes, Clearchus and Josephus identified them. Speaking of the Greek philosopher Aristotle’s account of a Jew, in *Against Apion* (1.179/I, 22), Josephus remarks: “This man, [answered Aristotle, ]was by birth a Jew, and came from Celesyria; ...these Jews are derived from the Indian philosophers; they are named by the Indians

## Clarke

Continuing this scholarship, in his commentary on Exodus 4:17, British theologian Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke (1760/2–1832) likewise engaged in the Bacchus-Moses comparison, taking the view, as we would suppose from a clergyman, that Moses was first:

Verse 17. *Thou shalt take this rod*] From the story of Moses's rod the heathens have invented the fables of the thyrsus of Bacchus, and the caduceus of Mercury. Cicero reckons five Bacchuses, one of which, according to Orpheus, was born of the River Nile; but according to the common opinion, he was born on the banks of that river. Bacchus is said to have been *exposed on the river Nile*. Hence he is called Nilus, both by Diodorus and Macrobius, and in the hymns of Orpheus he is named *Myses* because he was *drawn out of the water*. He is represented by the poets as being very beautiful and an illustrious warrior; they report him to have overrun all Arabia with a numerous army of both men and women. He is said also to have been an eminent *lawgiver*, and to have written his laws on *two tables*. He always carried in his hand the thyrsus, a rod wreathed with *serpents*, and by which he is reported to have wrought many miracles. Any person acquainted with the birth and exploits of the poetic Bacchus will at once perceive them to be all borrowed from the life and acts of Moses, as recorded in the Pentateuch...<sup>48</sup>

Here we see the same themes, admitted against interest by a theologian, who surely took the time to verify these correspondences, discovering whence they came, as they had been scrutinized for at least 200 years by numerous European and American scholars, representing possibly unparalleled peer review.

## Higgins

Also in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, magistrate Godfrey Higgins (1772-1833) repeated these various correlations:

In Bacchus we evidently have Moses. Herodotus says [Bacchus] was an Egyptian... The Orphic verses relate that he was preserved from the waters, in a little box or chest, that he was called *Misem* in commemoration of the event; that he was instructed in all the secrets of the Gods; and that he had a rod, which he changed into a serpent at his pleasure; that he passed through the Red Sea dry-shod, *as Hercules subsequently did*...and that when he went to India, he and his army enjoyed the light of the Sun during the night: moreover, it is said, that he touched with his magic rod the waters of the great rivers Orontes and Hydaspes; upon which those waters flowed back and left him a free passage. It is even said that he arrested the course of the sun and moon. He wrote his laws on two tablets of stone. He was anciently represented with horns or rays on his head.<sup>49</sup>

Again, the Bacchic epithet “Mises” repeated numerous time in these analyses can be found in the *Orphic Hymn 42*, discussed in greater detail in my book *Did Moses Exist?*

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Calami, and by the Syrians Judaei, and took their name from the country they inhabit, which is called Judea...” (Josephus/Whiston, 615)

<sup>48</sup> Clarke, 1.321.

<sup>49</sup> Higgins, 2.19.



## Taylor

All of this research over a period of centuries led to the conclusion by some that various biblical characters rank as allegorical figures, as expounded upon in the works of English minister Rev. Dr. Robert Taylor (1784–1844). Labeled “the Devil’s Chaplain” by his detractors, Taylor composed mythicist works asserting that certain biblical figures were *mythical*, not historical. Preaching this theme from his popular pulpit, the reverend was charged with “blasphemy” and imprisoned on two occasions for a year or more each, during which time he languished but got his thoughts into writing. In his book *The Diegesis*, Taylor likewise recited the Moses-Dionysus parallels:

In the ancient Orphic verses sung in the orgies of Bacchus, as celebrated throughout Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, Arabia, Asia Minor, Greece, and ultimately in Italy, it was related how *that* God, who had been born in Arabia, was picked up in a box that floated on the water, and took his name *Mises*, in signification of his having been “saved from the water,” and *Bimater*, from his having had two mothers; that is, one by nature, and another who had adopted him. He had a rod with which he performed miracles, and which he could change into a serpent at pleasure. He passed the Red Sea dry-shod, at the head of his army. He divided the waters of the rivers Orontes and Hydraspus, by the touch of his rod, and passed through them dry-shod. By the same mighty wand, he drew water from the rock; and wherever he marched, the land flowed with wine, milk, and honey.<sup>50</sup>

Since Taylor’s time, many others have written about these correspondences, not a few from the perspective that Moses is a mythical copy of Dionysus.

## Conclusion

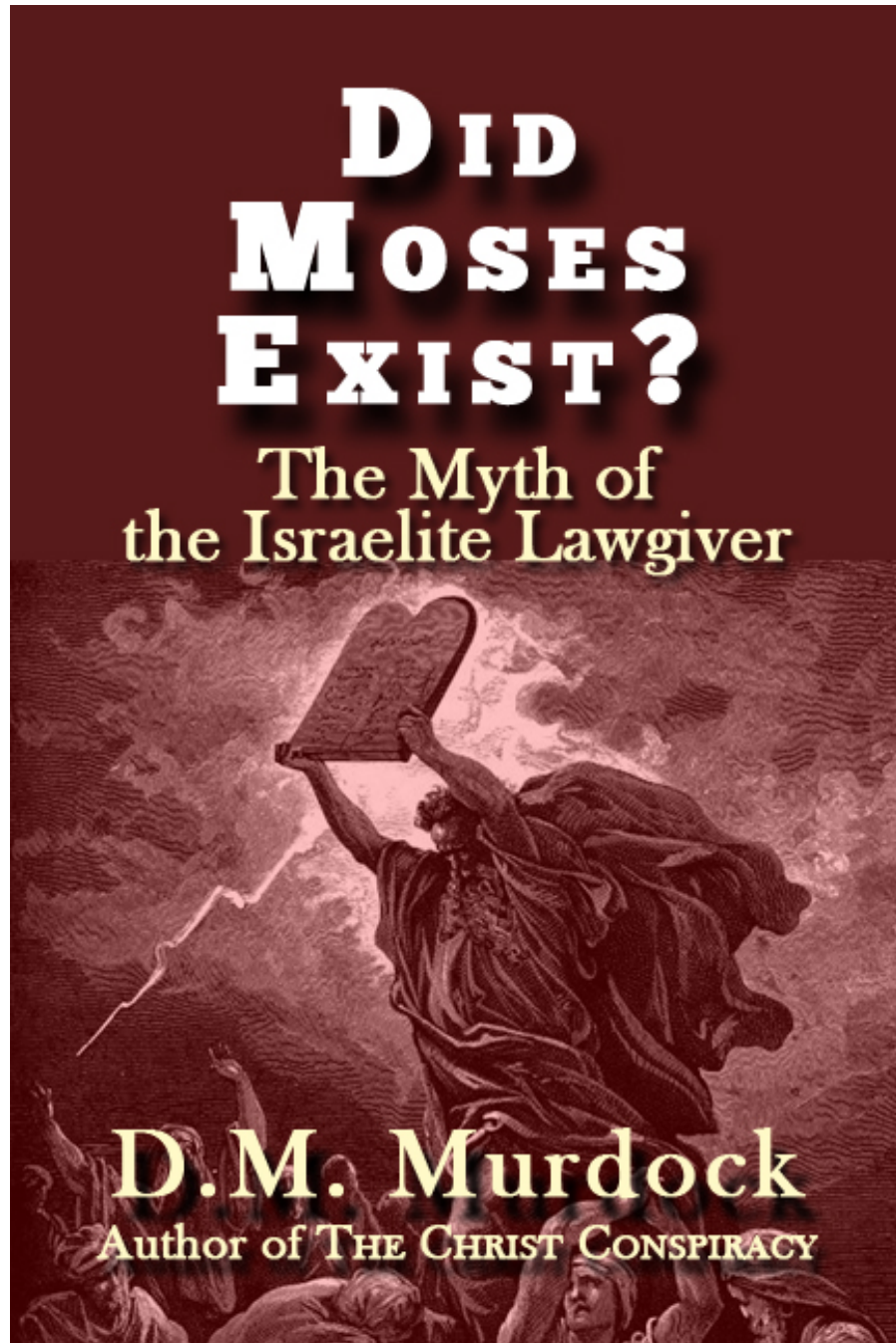
In studying literature dating back centuries and based on ancient texts, we discover traditions attached to Dionysus/Bacchus, also called Iacchus and *Mises*, which in essence resemble closely the story of Moses, full of fantasy and fabulous exploits better taken as myth than history. We also see that, for hundreds of years, scholars, ministers, theologians and others have noted these parallels between the Hebrew and Greek lawgivers, most attempting to establish biblical priority but some declaring that Moses post-dated and was derived from Dionysus.

This scholarship has been ignored, obviously, since it is unfortunately not well known today. However, many modern scholars do call into question the existence of Moses as a historical figure, observing, for example, that his nativity is unoriginal, as is his role as a lawgiver. Digging further, we might ask where the rest of the biblical story comes from. In Dionysus, we have one widespread archetype upon which much of the Moses myth appears to have been based. In my book *Did Moses Exist?* I provide the Bacchic parallels to the Moses myth in a convenient list, along with primary sources for them, including the original Greek or Latin. As one can see, there is more to this story than meets the eye.

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<sup>50</sup> Taylor, R., 190-191.

For more information, please consult:



[www.DidMosesExist.com](http://www.DidMosesExist.com)

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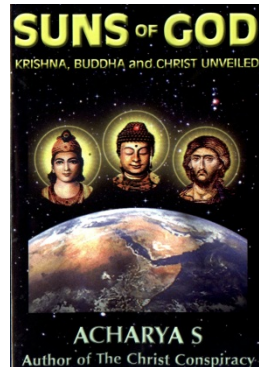
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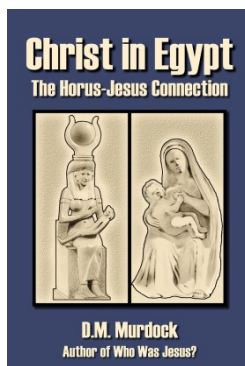
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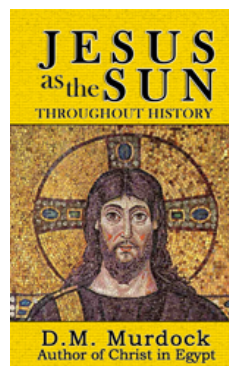
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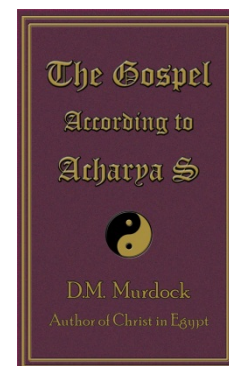
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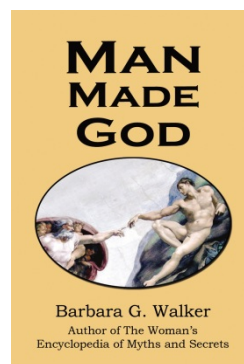


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